April Showers by boltplum

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Summary:

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April Showers

Author's Note:

Day 2: April Showers for Harringrove April!

It's pouring.

Raining cats and dogs, like his dad likes to say when he's around to say it.

As it is, Steve's been looking forward to having the house to himself for once this weekend. It had been a hellish week full of too much homework, too much detention, too much Nancy and Jonathan necking in the stands overlooking the cafeteria.

Too much of everything, really.

It's Friday and Steve is ready to go home and sleep for ten hours straight before spending all of Saturday and Sunday in his pool. Might even get a sunburn.

That's been his plan all week.

That is up until ten minutes ago, when the sky decided to split apart and flood the parking lot and all the rest of Hawkins.

Grumbling, Steve stomps his way through puddle after puddle to get to his car.

Maybe he can just spend all weekend in a hot bath instead.

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On his way home he sees something interesting.

A blue camaro— *the* camaro—the one that's been plaguing him since that night in November so long ago. He sees it everywhere so it wouldn't usually be so interesting.

Only, it's stuck.

It's stuck near the on-ramp to the main highway and it's Billy standing by the back bumper with mud up to his knees trying to lift his prized possession out of sudden mud slicked torrent.

Normally he would have smiled at the sight, felt vengeance was finally and sweetly his, and kept on towards home—only the wheels spin and the engine revs and Steve sees a familiar head of red hair at the wheel.

He psses them by and idles for all of a minute before sighing heavily and reversing.

Stopping alongside where Billy's stuck, Steve cranks down his window. Shouts out, "Need a hand?"

Billy doesn't seem to hear him.

So Steve honks a beat and gets rewarded with Billy jumping three feet out of his skin. He whips around, hair a mess and looking for all the world a drowned rat.

He narrows his eyes in something like scorn, flips Steve off.

Steve rolls his eyes and shouts again, "You got a cable we can use?"

Billy huffs. Glances back at his car and leans to the side to signal something to Max. The wheels stop turning.

With the back of his hand, Billy swipes wet tendrils of hair from his forehead. He's soaked through, and his jeans are ruined where he only barely manages to pull his legs free from the sludge.

He's muttering something under his breath when he approaches Steve's window, sloshing with every step.

Up close, he looks more defeated than anything else.

"What in high hell do *you* want, Harrington?"

"You, uh...I can give you a tow if you need it."

Billy just stares at him.

“You know, like, if you have a cable or something? I don’t have anything in my trunk, or I’d just dig it out. My dad keeps it in the garage and I’m not allowed to park in there—”

“I don’t care.”

Steve closes his mouth. Opens it again. “Look, you’re soaking wet and Max shouldn’t be in a position to get you guys even more stuck in that ditch, so will you just answer me? You have a cable or not?”

Billy goes squinty again. Steve’s come to dub it his thinking face. He used to take it to mean he was angry but that look—that was wild and bug eyed and all sorts of bad.

This, right now, was just Billy.

Billy glances back over his shoulder, somewhat forlorn at the sight. Then he turns back to Steve and clicks his tongue.

“Yeah. Fine. Whatever.”

He goes back to the camaro and pops his trunk. Steve rolls his window back up before getting out to help.

Billy’s trunk is filled with an open duffel stuffed with clothes, a tupperware full of quarters, a toolbox, and other random stuff. Messy.

Billy digs around and pulls out what they need.

Before he can do anything, Steve takes the cable and hook from him and goes to attach it to his car. He gets it secure quick enough and gives a thumbs up to Billy.

Billy nods and gathers Max from the cab. She shields her eyes and runs over to Steve’s car, climbing in the passenger seat with no preamble.

“Maxine!” Billy snarls. “You’ll get Harrington’s seats wet! Get the fuck out of there.” He frowns hard and goes to collect her, but Steve stops him.

“It’s fine! Really, it’s—it’s all good,” Steve insists, hurrying to get into

his own car to get the camaro unstuck as quick as he can.

It's not really fine. His car is pretty shitty as is, and water on his seats won't help any. But better than having Max anywhere near a car tossed in a ditch.

She's ringing her hair out when he climbs in.

"Oh, come on."

"You can afford it," is all she says. "Thanks. You know. For this."

"No problem."

Steve shifts into drive and tosses his arm over Max's seat, looking behind them to check it's safe to pull out into the other lane. There's no one else on the road besides him and Billy it seems.

Just his luck.

He straightens out and only when the first snap of tension does Max speak again.

"Neil won't like this. He got Billy that car but it's like a way to control what he does, I think? I don't really get it. But when he finds out Billy crashed it he's gonna blow."

Steve hums. Drives slow, uniquely aware of how Billy watches every moment.

"This isn't really a crash, Max. I got stuck plenty when I first learned to drive. April's kind of notorious for unpredictable weather."

"He still crashed his car."

"It's just mud," he says, not getting the big deal. "Rain and mud around here don't mix. Ask anybody who lives in the country. At least it didn't happen out in the woods. Once, I was heading to this midnight forest thing, Tommy and Carol had brought the—well you don't really need to know that part—but an hour in it started to rain, and everybody's car got stuck. It was actually pretty funny, after the fact."

Max huffs, impatient. Like Steve is stupid.

“Neil is gonna blow. He won’t let me go to the arcade tomorrow if he blows tonight.” She groans. Steve keeps pulling out, the cable a twanging thud through the chassis all the way up through the wheel and to his hands. “It always takes days for Neil to cool off.”

Steve sticks his tongue out in concentration. His wheels spin around nothing for a frightening moment before gripping cement and suddenly the camaro jolts a little. Billy whoops.

“That’s just what dads do,” he explains. “They’re supposed to get pissed when their kids do stupid stuff.”

Max goes *uh huh* , and Steve thinks she sounds very sarcastic.

“What?”

Steve glances at her. She looks away, out through the window.

Something doesn’t sit right with him the longer she’s quiet.

“Max.”

“I’m not supposed to say.”

Okay, he really doesn’t like that.

“Max. What is it?”

Her nose wrinkles up. He can see her glaring in the reflection.

“I can’t say.”

Steve frowns. Outside, Billy is gesturing like he’s flight control and somehow by waving his arms back and forth it will help Steve get the camaro out faster.

Another snapping twang, another good chunk of give.

“Max. Come on, tell me. He gets mad, so what? My dad gets pissed all the time when I do stupid shit.” He laughs to try and break the weird tension in the car. It doesn’t work. “And you know I do like

ninety percent stupid shit most of the time, so. I mean." More laughing.

Max doesn't budge.

But she does say, "Neil hits Billy. My mom and him think I don't know but I do. He beats Billy up and he'll do it tonight because Billy's car slipped and we went off the road."

Oh.

"He—" With a resounding thump, the BMW pulls the camaro the rest of the way free. It's wheels hit even pavement and Billy claps, bounding over to slap the roof of his car. "He hydroplaned?"

"What's that?"

Steve swallows. Watches Billy turn and smile brilliantly at them through the continuing torrent.

Steve waves a little and Billy pumps a fist in the air. He starts unhooking their cars.

He thinks while he pulls back into the first lane behind Billy, grimacing when he sees how caked in mud it really is. He'll be finding stray bits of grass and plantstuff for weeks.

"Um. It's like, sliding on water when you drive. Your brother just needs better tires."

Max seems to consider this. Then she wrinkles her nose again and says, "He's *not* my brother."

He laughs lightly, unable to think of much beyond Billy's dad apparently hitting him.

"Stay here a minute?" he asks, even as he unbuckles and climbs out of the car.

Billy slaps him hard on the shoulder when he's in range. "Hell yeah, Harrington. Thanks for that. I owe you one."

Steve gets an idea.

“Think I can cash that in now?”

Billy lifts a brow.

“You need better tires.”

“No shit. Think I more than figured that out. Where the hell did this storm even come from, huh? It wasn’t in the forecast.”

Steve shrugs. “It’s April in Indiana. Weather’s a bitch.”

Billy snorts at that. “If you’re telling me to get new tires as a favor to you, you’re not as sharp as I thought. I don’t have the money.”

Steve takes that to mean Billy’s considered him, at least so far, as *not stupid* . Which is...certainly something.

“No,” he mutters. He’s as wet as Billy is now. But all he can think is that when Billy goes home with Max in tow, his dad will take one look out the window and see Billy’s car and have a reason. A *reason.*

And Steve thought his dad was a prick.

“Not exactly. Way I see it, now my car’s all dirty from me stopping to help.” He shrugs to make his point. “I almost didn’t stop. You can thank Max for that.”

“Yeah, I got it. Daddy Harrington not a fan of water spots on his son’s prized beamer? Figures.” But he’s sighing, slumping a little as the grit lessens from his frame. The tension gone from him. “So what, you want me to wash your car?”

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Steve smiles. That’s what he’d been thinking in the first place.

But he turns partly away from Billy. Regards the sheer level of muck covering his usually gleaming blue ride.

“Let’s see how well you do on mine. Yours is pretty wrecked, man. It’ll take a few hours at least.”

Something sinks in Billy visibly. He frowns, clearly disappointed.

“Shit. I don’t have a few hours.”

When he looks away it’s toward Max, watching them from the dry haven of Steve’s car.

“Max can tag along. In this rain it’s not safe to drive anyway. Tell your folks the resident babysitter is watching Max for a few hours. And as aforementioned resident babysitter, I am officially advising against you driving her anywhere until this rain’s cleared up. That should give you plenty of time to make sure my ride’s spotless.”

Billy seems to mull it over. “And mine,” he finally all but growls.

“After mine’s all sitting pretty, the power washer is all yours,” Steve says. “I’ll order pizza and Max can pick a movie.”

Billy breathes out steadily, as if he’d been holding it in. “What if it rains all night?”

Steve grins, flipping wet hair out of his eyes. Billy tracks the movement.

“My house has a few guest bedrooms.” Then, more quietly he adds, “And if anybody needs a more official warning against driving in this weather…let’s just say I know the chief of police.”

That gets Billy’s eyes going wide. He shakes his head, gasping out a surprised little laugh as water drops shake free from his lashes. “Of course you fucking do.” Then, “Fine. Lead the way. I’ll follow you.”

Steve keeps grinning. Thinks maybe it even catches some as Billy smiles, tiny but there.

“Just drive slow this time,” he warns and Billy flips him off.

As Billy saunters to his car and gets his fingers around the handle, he suddenly turns back and calls out, “Harrington! What’s that they say about April showers?”

It’s coming down harder now. He’s going to need a shower when they get to his house. He knows they’ll probably both want one too. Billy will definitely need a change of clothes.

He tells himself it’ll be just to protect the furniture while they settle in and wait for the rain to pass. Or something.

Or something.

Steve thinks on the saying, wondering why Billy is just waiting for an answer. Like standing there soaking wet and half drowned in mud doesn’t bother him.

Then it comes to him.

“April showers bring May flowers!” he calls back.

And Billy nods, satisfied.